



Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, formerly known as Rhodesia, broke from British rule in 1965. Following more than a decade of turmoil, Zimbabwe's independence was finally recognized internationally in 1980. In the same year, Robert Mugabe was elected; he has been Zimbabwe's only ruler, suppressing dissent, sometimes violently. The country continues to experience instability, and elections are characterized by intimidation and ongoing land-rights conflicts.

There have been no major economic disruptions since 2009, but Zimbabweans have long experienced high unemployment, commodity shortages and hunger. For nearly 30 years, ACDI/VOCA has implemented programs in Zimbabwe that mitigate the effects of food insecurity and natural disaster by building capacity and creating access to financial resources.

Early Work Provided Training on Agricultural Credit and Business Skills

Through the mid-1990s, ACDI and VOCA targeted Zimbabwe's financial and agricultural sectors, expanding cooperative and farmer access to credit. VOCA's presence in Zimbabwe began in 1982. For the next seven years, VOCA fielded 10 volunteer experts who



worked with government ministries and independent organizations to create a national association of credit unions. They also established a nationwide cooperative farm supply distribution and marketing network and identified constraints in the transportation of agricultural goods. As part of efforts toward long-term sustainability, volunteers optimized the operations of a new printing department for the Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe.

VOCA volunteer presence in Zimbabwe increased in the 1990s, when 32 assignments were fielded. As part of the **Cooperative Core Grant** (1991-1993), volunteers worked with the National Association of Cooperative Savings and Credit Unions of Zimbabwe and created a central finance scheme. They also

conducted a feasibility study for the computerization of credit unions, led computer training for staff and advised on establishing a cooperative bank in Harare.

Volunteers in the **Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Program** (1992-1996) assisted with dairy production, cattle restocking, agroforestry techniques, spice production, export horticulture, cotton marketing and poultry production. They also designed a new wildlife management program and helped establish the Zimbabwe Agricultural Commodity Exchange.

ACDI also began a program of training in the 1990s. In 1993, ACDI provided a set of custom-designed courses in management for 20 small businesses in Zimbabwe. Participants were trained in export marketing, vegetable and fruit production, cut flower production and protection, nonperishable crop production and protection, and horticulture business management.

Strengthening Farmer Capacity to Boost Incomes and Food Security

Recently, ACDI/VOCA has implemented several programs that use a market-oriented approach to help farmers increase profits and productivity—strategies for sustainable livelihoods in the long run. The **Restoring Economic Agricultural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe (REALIZ)** program, a \$2 million USAID-funded project that ran 2009-2011, strengthened the ability of vulnerable but viable farmers to support themselves by

increasing incomes and food security. REALIZ was implemented in Mashonaland East and Manicaland provinces.

REALIZ emphasized partnerships with the private sector and minimized the use of distortive subsidies. ACDI/VOCA leveraged incentives of buyers and farmers to drive sustainable, positive changes in the system that lead to increased value chain competitiveness and inclusive, mutually rewarding benefits. In this way, REALIZ enabled smallholder farmers to engage in commercial agriculture by taking advantage of favorable opportunities in the horticultural market, while also ensuring that their food security needs were met.

REALIZ's strong learning agenda piloted interventions that could later be scaled up to improve effectiveness and sustainability of USAID's economic growth programming. A capstone workshop at the close of the program highlighted learning to donor, private sector and practitioner communities.

Other programs in Zimbabwe have also focused on building food security. The **Chimanimani Irrigation Restoration Project (CIRP)**, a one-year initiative funded by Australia's Direct Aid Project (DAP), aimed to increase the productivity of irrigation systems near Chimanimani. ACDI/VOCA awarded grants to irrigation scheme committees to restore and replace irrigation equipment in the area. CIRP helped increase incomes and improve food security for smallholder farmers in communal irrigation schemes.

ACDI/VOCA has also recently implemented two assessments as part of USAID **Support for Food Security Activities (SFSA)** contracts: **Gender Assessment: Improving Feed the Future Programming in Zimbabwe** (2011) and **Market Systems Assessment: Market Mechanisms to Achieve Food Security** (2012).

PRIZE: Addressing Emergency Food Needs and Long-term Recovery

ACDI/VOCA is currently implementing a program that addresses emergency food needs, post-disaster recovery and agricultural stability. **Promoting Recovery in Zimbabwe (PRIZE)**—a three-year Title II emergency program led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS)—aims to reduce chronic hunger and food insecurity by addressing emergency food needs and investing in longer-term agricultural development. As part of the consortium with CRS and CARE, ACDI/VOCA is collaborating with local partner, Community Technology Development Trust (CTDT), to serve as technical lead for livestock and agribusiness.

In the Mudzi and Rushinga districts, ACDI/VOCA and CTDT are using an integrated approach that improves access to food through vulnerable group feeding (VGF), Food For Asset (FFA) creation, improved agricultural productivity, conservation farming and capacity building in livestock management. PRIZE also draws upon our value chain approach to improve access to markets as well as to financial services through village savings and loans.

PRIZE has provided emergency food aid to 47,587 beneficiaries and shared guidance on nutritional needs of various family members, including pregnant and nursing women and young children. The emergency food delivery has bolstered vulnerable households so members can carry on productive economic activities and conserve assets like seeds and livestock. Further, the program has reduced the need for families to engage in high-risk coping strategies or illegal activities. Now, households can spend their scarce cash resources on essentials like medical care, further reducing household vulnerability.

Through its FFA component, PRIZE has helped more than 24,670 food aid recipients create or improve household and community productive assets, such as irrigation schemes and livestock dip tanks. PRIZE staff trains farmers in conservation agriculture, **Farming as a Business (FaaB)** strategies, savings and loan skills, and livestock production. Finally, PRIZE staff work with communities to employ disaster risk-reduction strategies and reduce vulnerability to future shocks. During these activities, ACDI/VOCA is analyzing value chains and engaging the private sector to develop income-generation strategies and create linkages between farmer groups and the private sector.

Future Opportunities in Zimbabwe

Over the years, ACDI/VOCA has developed cooperatives and unions in Zimbabwe and helped the country's farmers increase

production and profits. We have also improved food security and fostered resilience at both the household and community level. With such success, ACDI/VOCA is well-positioned for future opportunities in Zimbabwe that will build upon three decades of experience and expertise.

Published July 2013